

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested.

A proposed Drawing Correction has been attached to this Amendment in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion.

Claims 1, 2, 10-14, and 16 have been rejected as anticipated by Maekawa et al., US 5,765,774. Claim 1 has been rejected as anticipated by Behr, US 5,558,370. Claims 1, 2, 10-14, and 16 have been rejected as unpatentable over Frantom et al., US 4,655,312 in view of Maekawa et al. Claims 3-9 and 15 have been allowed.

Claims 1 and 16 both recite the electric motor pulling the occupant backward toward the back portion of the vehicle seat. Maekawa et al. discloses a seat belt retractor (20) for securing a passenger under crash conditions (Col. 5, lines 33-45). The retractor (20) is locked after the seat belt (9) is fitted to the passenger (Col. 5, lines 45-53). During a crash condition, the belt reel (2) moves against the springs (48, 49) forcing ratchet teeth (7, 8) of the belt reel (2) into engagement with ratchet teeth (46, 47) of the frame thereby locking the shaft (1) of the belt reel (2) (Col. 5, lines 45-53). Under this condition, the seat belt secures the passenger (Col. 5, lines (45-53), but cannot pull the passenger toward the seat because the shaft (1) of the belt reel (2) is locked by the ratchet teeth (46-49). Thus, the retractor (20) of Maekawa et al. stops retracting the seat belt (9) before the retractor (20) can even attempt to pull

the occupant of the vehicle seat backward toward a back portion of the vehicle seat.

Frantom et al. discloses a seat belt retractor (14) for removing slack in a seat belt (10) under crash conditions before crash loads are applied to the seat belt (10) by the vehicle occupant (Col. 2, lines 22-30). The retractor (14) ceases retracting the seat belt (10) (Col. 3, lines 40-48) when a predetermined load (I_m) is imparted to the seat belt (10) by the occupant. The predetermined load (I_m) is the same for both the slow speed operation and the high speed operation of the motor (42) (Col. 6, lines 55-64; Col. 7, lines 31-41). Thus, the retractor (14) of Frantom et al. stops retracting the seat belt (10) before the retractor (14) can even attempt to pull the occupant of the vehicle seat backward toward a back portion of the vehicle seat.

Behr discloses a seat belt retractor (12) for removing slack in a seat belt under crash conditions before crash loads are applied to the seat belt by the vehicle occupant (Col. 4, lines 13-18). The retractor (12) ceases retracting the seat belt (Cols. 5-6, lines 59-67 & 1-15) when a predetermined load is imparted to the seat belt by the occupant. The predetermined load is the same for both the slow speed operation and the high speed operation of the motor (12) (Col. 5, lines 1-8). Thus, the retractor (12) of Frantom et al. stops retracting the seat belt before the retractor (12) can even attempt to pull the occupant of the vehicle seat backward toward a back portion of the vehicle seat.

Additionally, it is respectfully submitted that the conventional retractor motors of Maekawa et al., Behr, and Frantom et al. would not be capable of producing a force sufficient to pull the occupant of the seat backward. These motors are only designed to take up slack. However, the motor (108) of Fig. 2 is designed to produce a force of 562 lbs. during a crash, which is sufficient to pull the occupant toward the back portion of the vehicle seat (Specification, page 37, lines 1-5).

Furthermore, a claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found in a single prior art reference. MPEP §2131. The identical invention must be shown in as complete detail as contained in the claim. MPEP §2131. Not Maekawa et al., nor Frantom et al., nor Behr expressly disclose a retractor pulling the occupant backward. Every reference to the retractor in Maekawa et al., Frantom et al., and Behr only states that the retractor takes up slack or fits the belt to the passenger.

New claim 31 recites that the electric motor produces a force of at least 562 pounds for pulling the occupant backward toward the back portion of the vehicle seat (Specification, page 37, lines 1-5). As stated above, the conventional retractor motors Maekawa et al., Behr, and Frantom et al. would not be capable of producing such a force.

Claims 1 and 16, as well as claims 2, 10-14, and 31 which depend from claim 1, are in condition for allowance.

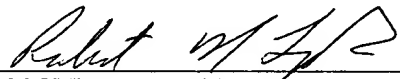
New claim 17 recites the allowable subject matter of claim 3. Claim 17, as well as claims 18-29 which depend from claim 17, are in condition for allowance.

New claim 30 recites the allowable subject matter of claim 15. Claim 30 is in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, allowance of the above-identified application is respectfully requested.

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,


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